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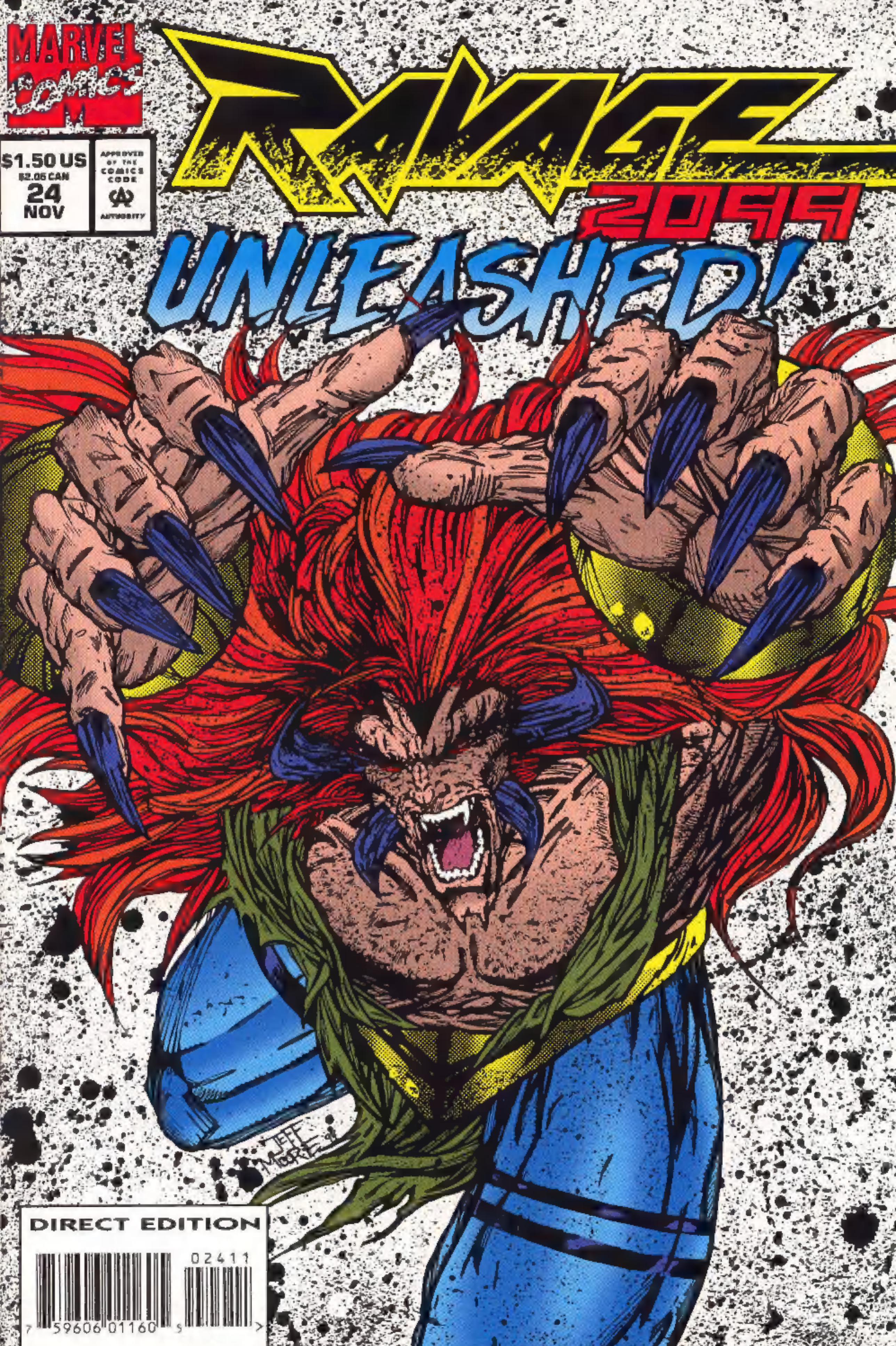

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WE HAD BEEN FLYING FOR HOURS... WE WERE BOTH HUNGRY -- AND THE WASTELAND SEEMED TO STRETCH OUT TO INFINITY..

HEY, FERRA -- WHAT ABOUT DOWN THERE? IT LOOKS PRETTY INVITING...

SUITS ME, RAVAGE... I LEARNED SOME TIME AGO THAT I CAN'T FLY FOREVER WITH YOU ON MY BACK.

IT WAS SO GOOD TO SLEEP IN THE WILD... UNDER THE STARS...

G'NIGHT, FERRA... HAVE BLOODY DREAMS!

ALWAYS DO, RAV...!

THERE ARE SOME LARGER ANIMALS DRINKING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE OASIS... I'M JUST GOING TO FEED!

UGH! DO YOU HAVE TO TELL ME? I KNOW WE'RE FELLOW BEASTS, BUT I STILL GET SQUEAMISH WHEN I THINK OF HOW YOU EAT...

...COULDN'T YOU HAVE BEEN A FRUIT BAT?!

SOMETHING DIDN'T SMELL RIGHT... STALE SWEAT--HUMAN... AND HOT OIL... LIKE A COMBUSTION ENGINE COOLING... A RUSTLE IN THE UNDER-GROWTH...

FERRA... HEY FERRA --WAKE UP!

I KNOW-- I DETECT A...

...DISTURBANCE?

BIG MISTAKE, BIKE BOYS! I DON'T LIKE BEING WOKEN UP FROM MY BEAUTY SLEEP!

FERRA! MOVE IT! THESE PSYCHOS AREN'T MESSING AROUND!

RAVAGE, I MAY NOT LOOK IT TO YOU... BUT I'M A LADY -- AND I MOVE WHEN I WANT TO MOVE.

FINE! GUESS YOU WANT ME TO TAKE CARE OF THESE JERKS ON MY OWN, THEN?

!!!EEEGH! AAAGH!

NOT AT ALL, RAVAGE -- I FIGHT IN MY OWN WAY...

...ALTHOUGH IT IS A LITTLE EARLY FOR BREAKFAST...

THAT'LL FINISH YOU ...FREAK! YOU'RE ON THE "ROAD RAT" RANGE ... MEANS, IF'N YOU AIN'T A RAT... YOU'RE DEAD!

GRRR! YOU THINK I'M A FREAK...? AT LEAST I STILL HAVE A FACE!

WHAT D'YA MEAN, "STILL HAVE A FA--

AAIEEGH!

SKRUNCH

RAVAGE...BEHIND YOU! HE HAS A GUN!

C'MON, BUTT-HEAD! SHOOT! YOU MIGHT GET LUCKY... I MIGHT EVEN FEEL IT...!

ER... I, ER...

NO... PLEASE...

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, HERO...? RUN! BEFORE I PULL YOUR LEGS OFF AND MAKE YOU WRIGGLE BACK UNDER YOUR STONE...

DO YOU WANT ME TO GO AFTER HIM?

NO. LET HIM LIVE -- HE MIGHT TELL THE OTHER RATS NOT TO TANGLE WITH US...

...LET'S FIND SOMEWHERE ELSE TO SLEEP... THIS PLACE STINKS!

OH, I WAS JUST THINKING HOW NICE IT SMELLED HERE!

THEY COULD REALLY FIGHT, THOSE TWO, EH...? IT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE A SURPRISE...

RATTEGOTT! WHAT OR WHO WERE THOSE TWO...?

OOOF!

WH--? WHO ARE YOU?

MAYBE THE BIG ONE WAS BLUFFING...? MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE SHOT THEM BOTH...!

MY NAME IS ATRIN. I'M YOUR FRIEND... I WANT TO HELP YOU...

TELL ME... IT FELT BAD BEING BEATEN, DIDN'T IT?

ARE YOU BURNING FOR-- REVENGE?

YOU LITTLE SQUIRT...

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW BEING BEATEN FEELS..

DON'T DO THAT! I TOLD YOU--I'M A FRIEND.

KRAK!

NOW, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE AT THE LARGE ONE WITH THE CLAWS... HIS NAME IS *RAVAGE*, BY THE WAY...

UH... YEAH --I MEAN, *YES*--I WOULD...

POP!

GRIND!

YAAAGGH!

BUT FIRST WE MUST *ALTER* YOU... MAKE YOU MORE FIT FOR COMBAT...!

HHHGRRRLURGH!

AFTER ALL... YOU DIDN'T DO VERY WELL ON YOUR LAST ENCOUNTER...

...BUT A FEW *MODIFICATIONS* ARE ALL THAT'S NEEDED TO MAKE YOU A MORE FORMIDABLE FOE...

...ALSO THE *CONSTANT PAIN* YOU EXPERIENCE WILL KEEP YOU BATTLE-HONED AND AGGRESSIVE!

C'MON, FERRA... JUST FOLLOW IT FOR AN HOUR OR SO... WE HAVE TO GO SOMEWHERE, AFTER ALL...

OF COURSE. BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND MY RELUCTANCE AT SEARCHING FOR ANY MORE HUMAN HABITATIONS...

HUMANS ARE NOTHING BUT TROUBLE... AND WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING FOR THE "VALLEY OF THE BEASTS!"

WELL, A VALLEY IS MADE BY A RIVER...

... AND WHO KNOWS -- IF WE FOLLOW ENOUGH RIVERS... WE MIGHT FIND IT... AT LEAST IT'S A PLAN...

...AND IF WE... THOR'S BLOOD!

FERRA... CAN IT BE TRUE...?!

WE'VE FOUND IT, FERRA! THE VALLEY OF THE BEASTS!

OUR SEARCH IS OVER... THIS IS OUR HOME!

I HAVE TO ADMIT--I WASN'T SURE IT REALLY EXISTED --UNTIL NOW!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT *LANGUAGE* THEY SPEAK... OR EVEN IF THEY HAVE ONE!

ER... HI! I HOPE WE'RE NOT INTRUDING HERE!

MY NAME IS RAVAGE... THIS IS MY FRIEND, FERRA... IF IT'S OKAY WE'D LIKE TO STAY HERE AND--

THEY'RE NOT HEARING YOU, RAVAGE... THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THIS PLACE... MY SONICS RETURN TO ME DISTORTED...

...IT'S ALL REAL — BUT SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT...

HELLO! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

YOU SEEM TO BE VERY SIMILAR TO MYSELF...

FERRA, YOU'RE RIGHT... NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WE'RE HERE.

Hmm... DIDN'T BARRIO MAN SAY THIS PLACE WAS DIMENSIONALLY UNSTABLE... PERHAPS IF WE...

IF WE, WHAT...?

...FERRA??

"FERRA...? WHERE ARE YOU...?"

FERRA? WHERE ARE YOU?!

HELLO, RAVAGE--MY NAME IS ATRIN AND I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

STRANGE, ISN'T IT...? THE WAY THEY ACT AS IF YOU'RE NOT EVEN HERE--

...OH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR CARNIVOROUS FRIEND... I'VE GOT IT SAFELY HIDDEN AWAY... IF YOU WILL JUST FOLLOW ME, RAVAGE?

RUN, RAVAGE--RUN! I'M TRAPPED IN SOME KIND OF FEATURELESS LIMBO... GET OUT OF THERE!

WELL, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL! SO LET ME PROVIDE YOU WITH SOMETHING FAMILIAR...

YOU NEED SOMETHING FAMILIAR, DON'T YOU?

I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE... BUT I WANT AN EXPLANATION...

...AND I DON'T TRUST PEOPLE WHO HAVE FRIENDS OF MINE "SAFELY HIDDEN AWAY"!

OH, GOOD! ARE YOU CONFUSED, RAVAGE? ANGRY? ARE YOU FEELING VIOLENT?

BUT NOTHING'S CERTAIN--YOU HAVE NO DIRECTION.

RAVAGE! ATRIN DID THIS TO ME, BECAUSE OF YOU!

WHO THE SHOCK ARE YOU?

WELL, YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING, SHORTY... I'M *REAL* FAMILIAR WITH BEING ATTACKED BY CRAZY BOZOS!

GRRR! THIS I UNDERSTAND!

I DON'T BUST SO EASY, RAVAGE... I'VE BEEN MODIFIED!

THIS TIME I GET TO KICK THE SHOCK OUT OF YOU!

THAT'S IT, WARRIORS... FIGHT! HACK! SLAY! MAIM!

DON'T MESS WITH THE RATS, RUGFACE!

K-KRAK!

RAAAAAGH!

THIS TIME IT'S GONNA BE DIFFERENT!

I'M MODIFIED, YOU HEAR?!

YEAH, WELL, SO AM I ...

WHEN IT COMES TO INDESTRUCTIBLE, I TAKE THE CAKE!

AAGHH!

GONNA BLEED YOU, FREAK... GONNA TAKE YOUR SHOCKIN' HEAD BACK TO CAMP ON A STICK!

SSS-SLASH!

I RECOGNIZE YOU... YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE RAT-BUTTS THAT ATTACKED US DURING THE NIGHT!

"SO YOU'VE BEEN MODIFIED...?

KISS GOODBYE TO LIFE, JERK!

WHAM!

SLAM!

"THINK I'LL DO A LITTLE MODIFYING...

SMAK!

"MYSELF...

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, FURBALL!

I RIPPED THE LAST JERK WHO CALLED ME "FURBALL" INTO PIECES... LOOKS LIKE I'LL BE MAKING IT A HABIT.

I'VE TRIED YOUR CLAW... CHECK OUT MINE!

OH...? SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO...?

WAUGH!

HEY, ATRIN-- CATCH THIS!

OOOFFF!

WATCH IT, YOU CLUMSY FOOL... I DON'T LIKE PERSONAL CONTACT!

YARRGH!

IS THAT SO? WELL, IF YOU DON'T LIKE CONTACT SPORTS--STAY OUT OF THE RING!

JUST ME AND YOU, SHORTY...

SPZZAK!

HOLD, RAVAGE! BEFORE YOU ATTACK, HEAR ME OUT...

RAVAGE, DON'T ATTACK.. I'M VERY CLOSE TO YOUR PRESENT LOCATION... I THINK THERE'S A WAY OUT OF THIS...

I COULD DESTROY YOU WITH EASE, RAVAGE, AS I BELIEVE I HAVE JUST DEMONSTRATED... BUT I CHOOSE TO LET YOU LIVE.

HAVE YOU NO CURIOSITY?

NO, I HAVEN'T... BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'LL STOP YOU FROM DELIVERING A SPEECH...

I AM LIKE A SPIDER, YOU SEE, RAVAGE... AND YOU ARE MY FLY... THIS CURSED VALLEY IS MY WEB...

BUT IT'S NOT FOOD I'M AFTER... IT'S ENTERTAINMENT.

I WAS A HUMAN ONCE, YOU KNOW... A SCIENTIST, FAMOUS IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR PHYSICS. IN THE MID 20TH CENTURY I WAS A PIONEER CONSTRUCTING THE *FIRST ATOMIC WEAPONS*...

WE HAD BEEN TOLD THERE WAS *NOTHING* IN THE DESERT BUT CACTUS, WILDLIFE, AND A HANDFUL OF INDIANS...

UNFORTUNATELY I STUMBLED ACROSS THIS VALLEY ...WHEN EVERYONE ELSE HAD RETIRED TO SAFETY--I WAS *TRAPPED* HERE!

THEY TRIGGERED THE *BOMB* ANYWAY, EVEN THOUGH THEY *KNEW* I MUST HAVE BEEN *SOMEWHERE* IN THE FLASH ZONE!

I SURVIVED, OF COURSE... THIS PLACE IS JUST ONE OF *MANY* "VALLEY OF THE BEASTS", AND THEY ARE ALL DIMENSIONALLY UNSTABLE... *YOU* HAVE YET TO *FIND* YOURS--THE *BOMB* HARDLY AFFECTED THIS ONE...

...BUT IT *CHANGED* ME, RAVAGE... HORRIBLY! I DIDN'T ALWAYS LOOK LIKE THIS! I DON'T BELONG TO YOUR DIMENSION *OR* THIS ONE.

I AM *TRAPPED* WITHIN A CERTAIN RADIUS OF THIS VALLEY... AND I CAN'T INTERACT WITH ANYONE HERE... I CAN AFFECT *NOTHING* OF THIS DIMENSION... YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW *BORED* I AM!

MY CONDITION HAS ITS *ADVANTAGES*, HOWEVER... BY AN ACT OF WILL, I CAN TWIST AND DISTORT THE FABRIC OF *YOUR* DIMENSION!

VERY SAD! BUT IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM... WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?

STAY HERE! BE MY GLADIATOR, AS I LURE OTHERS TO THIS SPOT... AFTER ALL, IF YOU REFUSE I'LL ANNIHILATE YOU RIGHT HERE AND NOW.

HATE TO INTERRUPT, RAVAGE... BUT I THINK I'M ABOUT TEN FEET UNDER THE GROUND YOU'RE STANDING ON...

IF THERE WERE SOME WAY YOU COULD GET DOWN HERE... THE SOIL IS OF OUR DIMENSION-- I THINK THE VALLEY IS MANIFESTED UPON IT...

OH, WELL-- HERE GOES NOTHING!

SMAK!

YOU FOOL-- I WILL VAPORIZE YOU FOR THAT!

AGH...! THAT WAS STUPID!

THANKS, SUCKER!

WHOOSH!

NO! WHAT ARE YOU...

WHAT ARE YOU DOING... HOW DID YOU KNOW?

C'MON, FERRA --WHERE THE SHOCK ARE YOU?

YOU'RE CLOSE, RAVAGE. JUST A LITTLE FURTHER.

FERRA! WHERE ARE YOU?

FERRA?!

THERE'S NO NEED TO SHOUT.

"FEATURELESS LIMBO!" YOU'VE GOT A BLIND-FOLD ON!

RAVAGE-- JUST GET US OUT OF HERE.

THANKS FOR ALL THE *CLUES*... FOR A SCIENTIST, YOU'RE PRETTY STUPID.

YOU CAN'T AFFECT THIS *ROCK*... BUT IT SURE CAN AFFECT *YOU!*

WHAT ARE YOU...? NO!

GGARRGH!

NO, KEEP AWAY... I WILL NOT BE *SULLIED* BY A SAVAGE... THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF EXPERIENCE I DESIRE...

THE CREATURES IN THE VALLEY *WERE* AWARE OF HIM ALL THAT TIME... THEY JUST *IGNORED* HIM...

...I KNOW THIS ISN'T *MY* "VALLEY OF THE BEASTS"!

HIS IMMENSE FRUSTRATION AND LONELINESS MAY HAVE BEEN *DESERVED*...

...BUT WATCHING THESE STRANGE CREATURES SOMBERLY PILING THEIR STONES UPON ATRIN'S BODY...